

## **Bob Courtney**

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## **Bob Courtney**

### **How extensive is your knowledge about Olathe's history?**

I gather more information all the time. I am currently the president of the Olathe Historical Society and that's been a tremendous resource to pick up more and more information about history. I first started getting interested in history by way of genealogy looking at family history and wanting to know what was going on at the times certain relatives were alive. My great-grandfather homesteaded in Kansas when it became Kansas Territory 1854, and just before President Lincoln became president. So, to try and pinpoint some of those milestones in history related to family history really got me interested in overall history.

### **What do you know about the Indian Tribes that were located in Kansas?**

There were mainly Shawnee Indians that were living here. Chief Black Bob had a huge reservation of Shawnee Indians that would be located approximately, what is Leawood South area, along State Line southeast of current Olathe. It was a huge reservation that they had prior to being moved to Oklahoma with many of the other Indians in this area.

### **Do you know when settlers started coming to Olathe?**

People were moving through this area starting in 1821 on the Santa Fe Trail. When Becknell started trade right after the Mexican War finished with Poncho Via in Mexico, Arizona, New Mexico area. The big silver mines that were down in that area became ripe for being able to take trade goods on the Santa Fe Trail down there and returning with gold, silver and other commodities. That opened up the trail in 1821. And many people traveled on that trail since then. He was not the first person to go on that trail. The Indians and even migratory animals used that trail prior to that. It was the highest point of ground where you had to cross the fewest number of streams but still had access to water periodically as you traveled on that trail.

### **When was the first population boom in Olathe?**

When it opened as a territory in 1854 the spring of that year many settlers moved into the area from nearby Missouri they came across the State Line. Missouri became a state in 1821 so when this area opened as a territory actually Kansas Territory went all the way into the Rocky Mountains at that time, before the western boundary of the state was set. We came in as a territory, a government was set up and started making decisions, people moved in from Missouri and other established states, the Ohio, Indiana, Illinois area. They were coming from back east again pushing that frontier back more and more. We became a state in 1861 so but there was a lot activities that were going on prior to that.

A lot of unrest as to how we were going to be developed as a state-free or slave- it depended on how Nebraska was entered as a state to keep the balance of slave and Free states in check. Supposedly, Nebraska was going to be a free state and Kansas was going to be a slave state. And to influence that vote there were a lot of border warfare going on which gave us the name "bleeding Kansas". Actually, this area where Johnson County is we saw ten years of war or conflict going on and because once we became a state in 1861 it threw off the balance of free and slave states that kicked off the Civil War in that same year.

We became a state in January of 1861 Lincoln took office that spring and then Fort Sumter got fired on to begin the Civil War in April of that same year. So the conflict went on in this area and that halted the population-people coming into this area for quite a while. People moved out of the area. People were forced out because they lost all their goods, they lost their house, they lost loved ones also.

### **After the Civil War, did the movement up north have any effect on Olathe?**

Some. There was some of that movement that came on in 1865 when the war ended. There was migration back into Olathe it became settled as a community once that conflict had ended. People got established residences, farms, businesses. There were some of the migration that came up from the South into this area. Nicodemus, Kansas being one of the larger African American communities that was established and certainly we had our African American community located here in Olathe also.

### **Why Olathe compared to other towns in the area, what made it special or unique against those other towns that were around?**

There were a couple of factors mainly, it was the trails. If you were in a wagon train and left Westport one-day's travel put you in the Olathe area. You camped that night, first night out on the trail. There were several trails that came through the area. Some of them originated in Independence, Missouri and that would be California and Oregon Trails, and the Santa Fe Trail also. They came around the south end of Olathe primarily, but everybody came and spent the night at the Lone Elm camp ground just south of our community. That was a huge camp ground that was kind of the eye of the needle. Everybody that was headed west; Santa Fe Trail, Oregon Trail, and California Trail camped there at one time.

One of the diaries, that I have heard about, a man stood in the middle of that camp ground and a quarter of a mile in every direction were wagon trains camped overnight. Wagons would start heading out at three in the morning hitting the trail heading southeast. By noon almost all of the overnight visitors would be gone and by three that afternoon the next group would be coming in. There were thousands of people that passed through the camp ground. When you left that morning, you headed down toward Gardner and just south of Gardner is the split in

the trail. If you were headed on the Oregon or California Trail you headed up north toward Nebraska, the Platte River area or you stayed on the trail and headed southeast toward Santa Fe, New Mexico.

**I know you have said that there are some original buildings still here in Olathe, what are some of them?**

The Park Cherry Building that's at the intersection on Park Street and Cherry Street. And in the city of Olathe that is where all numbering system goes for all the residences and buildings. That's at zero, zero. If you go east of that you're at 100 East, 200 East and so on. So that became a big focal point down by the city's square. The Mahaffie Farmstead and Stagecoach Stop is the oldest building in Olathe and built in 1865. Ott's Mill on Cedar Street where Cedar Street crosses Millcreek is an 1869 building. I believe that is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest building in our community. There are several old houses. The MVB Parker house at the intersection of Park and Troost is 1880's residence and there are some in the 1890's and turn of the century houses that are still here. But as far as downtown businesses most of those have been removed.

**What are some of the memorable buildings that have been taken down?**

The old City Hall where the current adult detention center is located that was still standing when I moved here, and that whole row of buildings on that side on the west side of the county square. On the north side was the Hotel Olathe which stood for years which used in the filming of the movie *In Cold Blood*, by Truman Compote. They actually did some of the filming there because the event that he filmed in that particular movie took place with the two people they were involved in the murders stayed there over night at one time.

South side of the square a lot of mercantile buildings were there, the Miller Department Store that was also the site on the south side of the first court house at the southeast corner of Park Street and Kansas Avenue. The site of the first court house building stood for years and years early school and education took place in that building at one time. Then George Washburn an architect from Ottawa, Kansas designed the court house that was built in the middle of the court house square. In fact he, that was the first of thirteen county courthouses that he designed. He also designed several other buildings in the community. The county infirmary, the county jail, one of the school buildings that was located at the intersection of Water Street and Loula Street. It was called the Red Brick School used as a high school. It was actually our second high school that we had. And there were several residences that he designed also.

On the east side of the square, there was an old movie houses the Park Cherry Building which still stands is there. But most of that is gone already through urban renewal in the 1960's and early 70's.

### **Where were the first houses in Olathe, and neighborhoods, first placed in the beginning?**

The first house as was told to me was at the intersection of Kansas Ave and one block north of Santa Fe, and was supposedly the first house that was built. There were farms out and around in the area. J.B. Mahaffie and his wife, Lucinda, when they moved to this area in 1857 which was when the town was founded by Dr. Barton, they bought a house here in town and actually moved it to their farm about a quarter mile east of town where the current Mahaffie farm is located. That was a wood frame house that they moved up and they lived in that house for a while and then on the north end of the property he had 160 acre farm up there. They were able to cut stone and build the stone house in 1865 and that is the house that is still standing up in that area.

So most of the early residences are gone but there are still a few that are still around. The Historical Society does a house tour every other year on the odd number years where we try to highlight some of the older houses, turn of the century houses, so people are aware of the history and the heritage that is still in our community.

### **Have you helped restore any buildings or had any involvement with older buildings that are still here?**

With the Historical Society the involvement is being able to open those up to the public and meet with the current homeowners and help obtain some of the histories of the houses so when people come through they can understand either the architectural significance or maybe who built the house or maybe a famous Olathean that lived there at one time. And we have had many famous Olatheans that grew up here and became famous nationally or even at state level.

### **Who are some of those people?**

We are known as the city of governors. We have had five governors that came from Olathe, three of them went on to be governors of Kansas one went on to be governor of Missouri, one went to be governor of Idaho.

Buddy Rogers grew up here. His father was a local judge. He played in Ott's Boy Band that was formed and very talented. He could play every instrument in the band. Went to Hollywood. He starred in the first movie that won an academy award for best picture. It was a silent movie called, *Wings*, and he was a star of that. Later on he married another silent movie star by the name of Mary Pickford, and they lived in Hollywood for many years. Both of them have passed away. The Olathe Community Theater Association has their facility in the old Presbyterian Church which was at one time called the Buddy Rogers Playhouse named in honor of him. He

would come back and visit. A member from the deaf community, Larry Parks, has starred in movies in Hollywood also.

Marshal Ensor, the football field here at Olathe North High School is called the Marshal Ensor Field, taught here for years and graduated from Olathe High School. He became very influential in the ham radio field and taught many people during WW II how to send messages during the war effort, because a lot of communications had difficulty during the war because the war was going on so he and his sister, Loretta, built a radio station at their farm south of town and that radio station still stands and is operational. The city has recently purchased it as a historic site and operates it as a museum.

Other people, John P. St. John, was a famous lawyer in town and became a governor of the state of Kansas. One of the Hodges brothers, Frank and George Hodges, George became a governor of Kansas. John Anderson, another residence of Olathe, became governor of Kansas. One of the graduates, Herbert Hadley, became governor of Missouri. Albert Beach, became a mayor of Kansas City, Missouri for several years. And so there is...and it goes on and on.

Ella Mahaffie, the daughter of J.B. Mahaffie and Lucinda, became a public school teacher and taught for over 52 years in the public education system, at Central School here in Olathe and in Kansas City, Kansas. So many famous people like that.

George Washington Carver went to school here at one time, the famous African American scientist when he was a teenager. A lot of that history is in and around this area.

### **What are some of the original families who are still here in Olathe?**

The Schlage family, I am trying to recall some of the ones I have seen in the school alumni directories that grew up here, went to school here and have remained here for many years. The Haskin family, Mike Haskin is currently a lawyer here in town at one time was a mayor and currently co-chair of the sesquicentennial committee planning the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday events for 2007. There are many others I would like to recall as many as I can, but they aren't coming to mind right now.

### **What are some of the businesses started in Olathe?**

Hodges Lumber Company, I mentioned that earlier, started here. It is no longer in business. King Radio is one those that was a business that started on the east side of I-35 as a telecommunication and aviation company making instruments for airplanes. They were bought out by Allied Signal. Allied Signal was bought out by Honeywell. Honeywell is located northwest of town at the intersection of Highway 7 and Highway 10. The original people that started King Radio started into a GPS company called Garmin and so that's a grass roots company that got

started here. The Tyson food company that has the big food distribution warehouse out next to the Olathe District Activity Center. At one time Mr. Tyson lived here in Olathe and so those roots he came back and built that company with a distribution center back here in Olathe. That is kind of an example that comes to mind right off hand.

**You said your family came here?**

Yes, my great grandfather moved to Leavenworth County just north of us in 1854, and homesteaded property up there.

**Do you have any idea what his reason for coming here was?**

He actually came from Missouri he had lived in the area around St. Joe. He was actually born in Kentucky, and came by wagon train to Missouri, and then when it opened up as Kansas Territory moved across the state line into Kansas. Opened up a one room house located on a 160 acres and eventually grew to 320 acres. He traded with some of the Delaware Indians that were living in that area at the time. Built a cabin on Walnut Creek and I have visited the farm site the house was still standing when I visited. It has since been burned down. I don't know whether it was lightening or an accident or what happened. He and his wife had 11 children and my grandfather was one of those. They still hold the Courtney Family reunion the last year was the 72<sup>nd</sup> annual Courtney Reunion and several people still live in the area around Leavenworth. And I go with my father who is still alive. He is 91 years old and now living in Olathe and we go to that family reunion each year and there are about 40 people that attend.

**So has most of the family since then stayed in this area?**

Quite a few of them, although we're drawing people now in the last reunion which is always held in June up in the area of Leavenworth or Tonganoxie or McLouth Kansas. We drew people from New Jersey, California, Australia, and Alaska. So those are some of the remote areas that we have drawn from recently.

**Are there businesses that have been here for a substantial period of time?**

Steve Attig photography has been in business quite a while and survived in the downtown area. It is very difficult for businesses to survive downtown. Downtown has really become a government center since we are the county seat. With county business and city businesses and government businesses located there it has been very difficult for retail businesses to make a go of it.

And it appears not just in Olathe but in other areas retail development is happening along interchanges on the interstate. 119<sup>th</sup> is a prime example, 151<sup>st</sup> Street with the Great Mall and

other businesses located there. So it's, the businesses that are still located in the downtown area are almost catering to the government workforce that is down there, and that is a pretty substantial number. We are talking several hundred daily Monday through Friday. The problem has been created that when they come to work they've taken up all of the customer parking spaces downtown. And so that has been an ongoing problem the city is talking about building additional parking spaces and working with the county government on a joint project to add around 300 more parking spaces in a multilevel parking garage on Chestnut Street. So that has necessitated some problems with some of those old downtown businesses.

The Frye Funeral Home has been there for some time. Hank Frye, they have since merged or have been bought out by McGilley and so that is a merger of Frye & McGilley Funeral Home now. They kept the name Frye I am not sure how much Frye family is still involved in that business. Hodges family, there is still Hodges family still in the area, but they're no longer in the lumber business or real estate. But certainly they made a big mark on our community. There are several lawyers, the Haskin family, that have been carrying on business. The Pickering House which is a bed and breakfast that was established by Colonel Pickering at one time and his family lived there. The MVB Parker house is another bed and breakfast now owned by family have opened it up for retail or commercial business with the bed and breakfast. Barber shops they have kind of gone by the wayside. I remember Mr. Glover, Arbie Glover, had his barber shop, and nobody in his family has really picked up that particular business. He has a son that is working with the city now, but not in the family capacity. Jim Silvers had a jewelry store. Hannon Jewelry has been there in its second generation now. The dad started it and the son has continued the business at the intersection of Park and Chestnut Street. But a lot of the old businesses are gone. The old car dealerships have moved out along frontage road on I-35. They were here for quite a while. Rendleman, at one time, had their office supply store downtown and it's no longer down there. So it's, it's not the same.

### **When did Olathe become the county seat and how did it become the county seat?**

Actually they celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> birthday a year ago in 2005. So we became the county seat and as with most designations like that, "who is going to be the county seat". Originally it started in Gum Springs, which is now Shawnee, and it started there and it kind of been a "who had a political influence at the time". Most county seats were located in the center of the county and the reason for that was anybody that lived in the county should be able to go into the county seat and pay their taxes and get back home in one day. And that's where Olathe centrally located in the heart of Johnson County. Why Olathe? Another factor was because our location on the Santa Fe Trail. One of the survey points for laying out the town was where the Santa Fe Trail crossed Mill Creek. That location happens to be pretty close to John P. St. John Memorial High School. It's located between Santa Fe and Park Street where Mill Creek runs

behind the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. That would be about the crossing of the Santa Fe Trail at Mill Creek and that would be a survey point for the original two quarters section of land that Dr. Barton founded. And so here you had that centrally located right in the middle and also the highest elevation in the county is where the county courthouse is built.

### **Can you talk about “bleeding Kansas”?**

I mentioned that before about the border warfare and Quantrill Raid on Olathe. He raided every town in Johnson County except one and that becomes a trivia question and that happens to be Desoto, because he had a friend living there. And so therefore, he never touch Desoto but every town that was in existence at that time got raided. Spring Hill and Aubrey and Shawnee they all got raided by Quantrill raiders. Bleeding Kansas, of course, with the John Brown issue, and as to how we were to be entered as a state, free or slave. The influence by the border ruffians as they were called the “bushwhackers” continually crossing the line. The line was crossed by people coming from Missouri to Kansas and by people going from Kansas into Missouri to retaliate. So there was atrocities on both sides. The Jayhawkers and the Red legs, if anybody does some study on that you find out a lot of things that went on. Then once we got established as a state in 1861, Quantrill made his raid in September of '62. He had 150 men that crossed the state line sometime after midnight on September the 6<sup>th</sup> killed one of the Judy Brothers on his way to Olathe, burned down some houses got here just after sunrise on the morning of September the 7<sup>th</sup> in 1862. Rounded up all of the town's people, he killed 6 men in Olathe looted all the towns and businesses. This would have been during the Civil War period and then took off again. That's one of the reasons why we hold “Old Settler's” when we hold it; is on the first Saturday following the day of that raid. And very few people realize that. It is more of a...we have a carnival; we have a parade and stuff like that. But it's not to celebrate the raid its more in a commemoration of that event. The first “Old Settler's” when that was set up that is why that was selected at that time.

### **What does it take to be an Old Settler?**

There is an age limitation. You have to have lived in the county for I believe it is 45 years to register as an “Old Settler”. Some of that was set up a long time ago, and there are people that register and new people register every year during the “Old Settlers” event. And that is not just an Olathe event it is the “Johnson County Old Settlers” to recognize all of the “Old Settlers” that were in the county when we became a state.

### **Are the 45 years consecutive years or a total of 45 years?**

I don't know. I've not registered and I am eligible to register but I haven't. I moved into the county in the early 50's into the Shawnee Mission area.

**I think Olathe is unique amongst the other towns around here, do you feel the same way?**

Well I think being a county seat has certainly driven a lot of that. The other communities, especially Overland Park, rose out of more of a suburb of greater Kansas City. I need to mention J.C. Nichols who grew up here in Olathe and graduated from Olathe High School. Being a real estate developer of the Country Club Plaza, and what he did with Fairway and some of the other communities around here to help further that development growth. The other was Charles Hyer, the Hyer Boot Company, again one of the old businesses.

Your questions are triggering some of the other things we talked about earlier. Giving rise to the modern cowboy boot with a pointed toe that would slide into a stirrup easily and then the raised heel that would catch on the stirrup and not allow the foot to slip out. And what an influence that had nationally. He sold boots to presidents and movie actors and people worldwide, which again put Olathe on the map.

It's only been recently that as communities have grown Olathe growing outward co-centrally and other communities in Johnson County growing toward us that we are now blending and we're merging. Olathe has been on a big growth pattern for many years as we have been able to tell in the school district with our population growth. What we are seeing in most metropolitan areas is you see a concentric growth every twenty years. As children leave the school system go off to college and come back and sometimes live close to mom and dad and begin their own families. The same thing is happening in the greater Kansas City area with Olathe and Blue Valley on the Missouri in Lee's Summit and Blue Springs. You are going to see that growth. The next big growth is going to be Desoto, Gardner, and Spring Hill and as that widens and that's kind of a true feature with a lot of metropolitan areas that have that multi-directional growth.

**You have lived here in Olathe how long?**

Since 1969.

**What are some water shed events that were major occurrences in your mind that occurred in Olathe since you have lived here?**

Urban renewal was a big one, and a lot of the old timers refer to it as "urban removal". We lost a lot of the character of the downtown area. We lost a lot of the neighborhood cohesiveness. Some of the design of houses-I happen to live in an old house in the downtown area. It's a 1921 American four square design. Big front porches-people used to sit out on their front porches. People used to walk their neighborhoods.

As you get into the 70's and 80's people started building patios and privacy fences. And they did all their family activities behind their houses. And we lost a lot of the neighborhood feel. And that was to me a big factor in people moving out of old houses. There seemed to be a mind-set against old. Old buildings were torn down-urban renewal. People moved out of old houses because they were old. Not because they weren't good, not because they were falling down, but because they were old. And that was a shame.

The Old Central School and the Central School that we have right now is the 4<sup>th</sup> Central School on the same property. And some of the previous Central Schools were torn down and they said the wrecking ball had a hard time tearing them down because they were built so well. Why did you tear them down, they were old. Having a love for history, that just rankle me. Just because it was old. The old county farm was a beautiful old building up at 119<sup>th</sup> Ridgeview and it was torn down because it had out lived its usefulness and no I don't think so, it could have been repurposed. John P. St. John, the Memorial High School that was built in 1926 and occupied by students in 1927 what's going to happen to that building? If it gets torn down there will be a huge outcry from the older citizens that live here. Can it be repurposed? It should be, the city rents it out for some activities now especially the gym. The senior citizen group meets in there and there are some other activities going on in there now. I am glad it is still being used. I hope it doesn't get torn down. It's a beautiful old building. It's the oldest school still standing right now. And actually it's our third high school. Olathe High School opened at this location in 1958 which would have been the 4<sup>th</sup> Olathe High School. And it's a...it's got quite a history itself. There's been seven addition put on to this school alone. In the time it's stood since '58, and became Olathe North when Olathe South opened in '81.

### **How long has there been a high school in Olathe?**

The first high school was built in 1868, for the purposes of a public school building. Public education took place in Olathe in homes and businesses and other places around the community. In 1865, and again after the war, after the Civil War, when there was stability in the community. You started seeing the opening of churches and the consensus in the community voted \$2000 for a school building. It wasn't enough. But they added more money in the following years. Finally they had \$10,000 and that was enough to build a stone school building at the intersection of Loula Street and Water Street on the North east corner at the edge of Olathe. It opened in 1868. They had 175 students that attended.

Now some private schools were still going on at the same time. "Subscription schools" parents paid, very similar as to what a parochial school would be today. They paid to have their children attend and get private instruction. There was an Olathe College in 1870 that lasted for about seven years. So there is quite a history of that. The original high school 1868, stood for 30 years at that location. And finally the walls started budging out on it construction wise. And if you

have ever seen any of the old buildings that have those big metal stars on the outside what they have done is run a rod clear through the building and screwed the stars on to keep the building from budging out further.

Well until 30 years after it was built the Board of Education finally decided we can't re-retrofit or maintain this building any more it was finally demolished and in 1898 they built what is called The Red Brick School House. That was designed by George Washburn the architect out of Ottawa. It was built a three story building, the Board of Education was located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and it housed all of the high school students and at that particular time it was a three year high school. It originally started out as a two year high school in the old building. It became a three year high school then in 1904 became a four year high school. Central school, the first elementary school, opened in 1882 and was a first through eighth grade and they had 40-60 kids in a class.

### **What are some of the older churches in town?**

The Olathe Community Theater Association occupies the church on Loula Street, which I believe was the old original Coventer Church when it opened in the late 1800's. That may be the oldest church. The Second Baptist Church where the Reverend Bobby Love is actually that church has been rotated 90 degrees from where it originally sat. It was turned to face a different direction with in the last ten years. I believe it was ten years. Downtown is the Christian Church at the intersection of Chestnut and Loula Street. It's been there early on since the early 1900's. In the middle of Chestnut Street, the middle of the 200 block South Chestnut, which is now occupied by the Olathe Club for the deaf. That was a church that's over 100 years old, built in the late 1890's I believe, and it's still standing and it has had an addition put onto it and it's been greatly changed on the interior. The old Baptist church where the community garden is now located was there for many years and an individual bought it did not maintain it very well and it fell into disrepair, the city finally bought it and demolished it. That's now city property. But a lot of the churches all along Loula Street, there were probably five to six churches located in that one area and of which I believe only one, the Christian Church still stands.

### **You said in 1868 there was a high school built can you recall whether there were other high schools in the county being built during that time?**

There were private schools going on. I have a map of 1926 which shows 100, one-room school districts in the county. It also shows six high school districts of which Olathe was one of them. When the 1868 school opened, we drew a lot of students from the county. So I don't know if there was anything else available for them at that time. They would come in to school and some would be boarded during the week and then return home on the weekends. Some would ride horses in and could return home each evening.

**You have a wealth of knowledge and if you can think of other things we would certainly like to hear them.**

Certainly there is a rich history of everything: people, places and events that have happened here. The Historical Society is working with the Mahaffie Farmstead to open a new facility called, The Heritage Center. Located east adjacent property to the Farmstead itself. The groundbreaking for that is scheduled for Tuesday of next week, and inside there it will be about yearlong construction and should open December of '07 and the end of sesquicentennial year. Inside that building will be two galleries, one large one depicting the Mahaffie Family from roughly 1857-1875. The Historical Society will have a gallery in there also. A smaller gallery where we will try on a rotating basis on themes to be able to do a different themes of Olathe, whether school, religion, travel, governors we have already devised a list of around 30 theme topics that we'll put on display in our gallery. The groundbreaking will be 10:00 on the property adjacent to the farmstead. It will be a photo op' the city council will be there, because it is city property and primarily city funded. They're putting in 2.1 million dollars then the Historical Society we did receive a gift from Mr. R.R. Osborne \$375,000 so that we can have a presence in that building.

**The property across the street with the house, was there anything significant about that house?**

The property was, at one time, that was a 9-hole golf course in Olathe. The chimney that is standing there, went with the club house for that golf course. There is still a small brick building up there that was a gas station at one time. And there is a potential that we might be able to put some displays and artifacts in there for people who want to stop and look in there about transportation in Olathe, because Kansas City Road is the Santa Fe Trail.

**What about the Strang Line that came through Olathe? Didn't it?**

There was an extension of it that came through downtown. The tracks came up Park Street right in front of the School for the Deaf came into the downtown area on Cherry Street. There was a depot there a turnaround area. One of the pranks at Halloween that the school kids would do is greased the tracks. As you left the School for the Deaf and came up the hill toward downtown area and the Strang Line car could not make it up the tracks and everybody that was on the car would have to get out and help push it up that small incline.

**Did that go all the way up to the city?**

Yes, that part of an interurban connection. There were different spokes that went out different directions from Metro Kansas City.

### **Where will the Historical Building be built?**

It will be on the north side, the same side as the Mahaffie Farmstead. There's a 12 acre piece of land over there that is currently vacant. The Park is across the street which is about a 40 acre piece of land with the ponds on it, and they will keep it as natural prairie. It becomes a viewshed for people. You're looking across natural prairie land to the to the Historic Farmstead and Stagecoach stop. That is the only stagecoach stop on the Santa Fe Trail still open to the public. On the WHOLE Santa Fe Trail. There are bits and pieces of other stops, but a lot of it is on private land or there are no activities there, it's not occupied or there is nothing to do there.

### **I went to Ridgeview School and we used to walk there. I loved that school it is old, but I loved it.**

Ridgeview is an old school, 1856. It is a neat place and it is on the National Historic Register. We have seven buildings in Olathe on the Historic Register state or national and that is more than any other town in Johnson County combined.

There was a survey done at the request of the city planning department, I got the results back from the survey in what is called, "original town", and that is from I-35 to Hwy 7, Harold Street to Hwy 56 and they identify potentially 25 buildings that could be placed on a register. Now the historical society and the Central Core Neighborhood committee, and since I live in that area I am on that committee also, and I am also on the Mahaffie Foundation, we're working with the city to designate "historic preservation districts" within the "old town area". Which means, there would be grant monies available for people to be able to restore their houses or businesses if you want to put a new phased on in a historic manner: lighting, signage, anything like that.

The first step was getting the city council to become what is called "certified local government" and be registered with the state. That's been done. So now there next step is to appoint a "historic preservation commission" and once that is in place then they will go through setting set up the historic districts.

Indian Jim was a master brick layer. He laid a lot of the brick streets, Kansas City Road being one of them. When they paved the Kansas City Road down by the First National Bank they took up all the street including all of his bricks and they went with the contract and all those bricks are gone. They should have been saved. Before we had TV, before we had radio, before we had that, they would hold brick laying contest. Indian Jim was an Oneida Indian from New York, I am not sure how he wound up in Olathe, but he laid a lot of the brick streets that are in Olathe and it's under a lot of the blacktop that is here right now. He could lay two bricks a second. It would take six brick carriers "hod carriers" supplying him bricks to keep up with him. There would be contests held with, "ok Emporia send us your best brick layer", "Leavenworth send us your brick

layer” and they would hold contests and that would be a community event. He beat all comers. And so he had quite a reputation. There are newspaper articles about him.

**Were there ordinances that the bricks had to be locally made since there are several companies that have their names on the bricks?**

Diamond brick is one of the popular ones that were made and a lot of them came from Southeast Kansas, came from there, but yes, a lot of the communities made bricks and sold them to other communities that didn't make their own bricks and that's why a lot of them wound up in Olathe.